



Co-operative Federation of Victoria Ltd

RMB 1282 Langs Road, Blampied, Victoria, 3364

Telephone: (03) 5345 7466 Fax: (03) 5348 3253

Email: coopvic@netconnect.com.au

21 May 1999

The Hon. Jan Wade, MLA
Attorney-General and Minister for Fair Trading
GPO Box 4356QQ
Melbourne 3001
Victoria

Dear Minister:

I write concerning the latest message from the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) prepared for the 77th International Co-operative Day on 3 July 1999.

I have enclosed a copy of the ICA's message.

The message focuses on public policy and co-operative legislation and the need for the legislation to include a definition of co-ops, recognise co-operatives as legal entities and involve representatives of the co-operative movement in the formulation of the legislation.

These conditions have been achieved in Victoria.

What I would like to suggest is that this year's International Co-operative Day is an opportunity for the Victorian Government to issue a news release emphasising its enlightened support for co-operatives and how these concerns of the ICA have already been met in Victoria through a supportive relationship between the Federation and the Government.

The Federation would be please to either participate in the development and issuing of a joint news release and/or issue its own complementary news release.

I look forward to your response.

In co-operation,

David Griffiths
Chairman

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77th International Co-operative Day -- Saturday, 3 July 1999

Message from the International Co-operative Alliance

Public Policy and Co-operative Legislation

The importance of good public policy and legislation for the development of the co-operative movement is highlighted in the latest report of the United Nations' Secretary-General to the General Assembly (A/54/57). The report will be discussed by the General Assembly during its 1999 session from September to December.

The Secretary-General's Report arrives at conclusions and findings which are very supportive to the co-operative movement and, for the first time, it contains draft Guidelines aimed at creating a supportive environment for the development of co-operatives.

Prepared by COPAC (the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Co-operatives) at the request of the UN General Assembly and the UN Secretary-General, these Guidelines emphasise that co-ops should be recognised as legal entities and assured real equality with other types of associations and enterprises.

While stressing that appropriate provision is necessary within legal, judicial and administrative practice to allow co-operatives to prosper on an equal footing, the Guidelines also suggest that representatives of the co-operative movement be invited to participate in the formulation of co-operative legislation. It reiterates that financial self-reliance, total responsibility and full independence are vital for an effective co-operative enterprise.

The Guidelines also propose that Co-operative Legislation should include a definition of co-ops using the Statement on the Co-operative Identity adopted by the International Co-operative Alliance in 1995.

Only a few months after this Report was circulated to UN member states, the Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation decided (in March 1999) that it would place the revision of co-operative policy and standards high on its list of priorities and has added this issue to the Agenda of the International Labour Conference for the year 2001. This decision reflected an understanding on the part of government, worker, and employer representatives about the importance both of co-operatives and of good public policy regarding co-operatives.

If the Report of the Secretary-General, including these draft Guidelines, is approved by the General Assembly later this year, it will demonstrate to governments around the world that co-operatives need and deserve the same treatment as other forms of enterprise, based on policies which recognise their special character.

The International Co-operative Alliance calls on its member organisations around the world to inform their governments that they support the Report of the UN Secretary-General on the Status

and Role of Co-operatives (A/54/57), and to urge their governments to support the Report when it comes before the UN General Assembly later this year.

It also calls on its more than 750 million members at grassroots level to support their national and local co-operative initiatives by organising events and taking part in Internet-based and more traditional lobbying campaigns, as appropriate.

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15, route des Morillons, 1218 Grand-Saconnex, Geneva, Switzerland

Tel: (+41) 022 929 88 88 Fax: (+41) 022 798 41 22

E-mail: ica@coop.org or treacy@coop.org



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